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Be it known to all
that this book is given by
John C. Yalland
with his kind regards of 3rd Feb^r 1843.

THE USE OF THE OFFERTORY.

A LETTER

TO THE RIGHT REV. THE

LORD BISHOP OF WORCESTER,

HUMBLY

SUGGESTING A MODE OF GIVING GREATER EFFICIENCY

TO THE

Worcester Diocesan Church-Building Society,

AND TO OTHER

SIMILAR EFFORTS OF THE CHURCH.

BY THE

REV. RICHARD SEYMOUR,

RECTOR OF KINWARTON,

AND RURAL DEAN.

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“Now concerning the collection for the saints, as I have given order to the churches of Galatia, even so do ye. Upon the first day of the week let every one of you lay by him in store, as God hath prospered him, that there be no gatherings when I come¹.”

“Mark how he exhorts them even from the *time*: for indeed the day was enough to lead them to almsgiving. ‘Wherfore call to mind,’ saith he, ‘what ye attained to on this day: how all the unutterable blessings, and that which is the root and beginning of our life took place on this day. Moreover, the communicating also on this day in mysteries so tremendous and immortal, instils great zealousness.’ On it, accordingly, ‘*let each one of you*, not merely this or that individual, but each one of you, whether poor or rich, woman or man, slave or free, *lay up in store by himself*.’ Observe also how he avoids being burthensome. He saith not, ‘so much,’ ‘or so much,’ but *whatsoever he may have been prospered in*, whether much or little. . . And by his not enjoining them to deposit all at once, he makes his counsel easy; since the gathering by little and little hinders all perception of the burthen and the cost².”

“The poor hath as much right to your alms, as you have to your estates; alms being as a rent-charge which God hath reserved for the poor, out of the estates, which He hath put into your hands. Hence the same word, which in Hebrew signifies *righteousness*, in other oriental languages, especially

¹ 1 Cor. xvi. 1, 2.

² St. Chrysostom, Library of the Fathers, vol. v. p. 606, 607.

Syriac and Arabic, is commonly used for *alms*; and the Hebrew word itself is ordinarily translated by the LXX ἐλεημοσύνη, almsgiving, or charity: and so it is plainly used in Daniel iv. 27³.” (Compare Job xxix. 11—16; St. Matth. xxv. 34—40.)

³ Beveridge's Sermons, vol. iv. 403.

A

LETTER,

&c.

MY LORD,

I HAD fully purposed to attend the late important meeting called by your Lordship for the revival of our Diocesan Church Building Society ; and I had intended, if an opportunity was afforded me, to call the attention of those present to a mode of proceeding which has long commended itself to my mind as eminently calculated to obtain for that Society assistance larger in amount, and more universal as regards the contributors, than it has ever yet received. Having been unavoidably detained at home by parochial duty, I venture to address to your Lordship the substance of the remarks which I had purposed to make to the meeting ; not, my Lord, that I imagined myself capable of recommending what I had in my mind by any powers of language, nor that I imagine myself able to do so now by my pen, but because I have a deep conviction that the plan to which I wish to call attention is that which is most likely, under the good blessing of God, to effectually promote not only the building of churches, but also the other great kindred works in which the Church is now engaged, and which your Lordship has proved to your diocese that you have so much at heart.

The mode of proceeding to which I refer is, the regular use of the Offertory as directed by the Rubrics in the Book of Common Prayer.

In venturing to address your Lordship on this subject, I must premise, *first*, that I am in no way actuated by the idea that I can afford your Lordship any information upon it, or that any thing I may say can influence your Lordship's judgment. I am not actuated by any such presumption: but my desire is, to call the attention of some of my clerical brethren to a subject which possibly may not have much occupied their thoughts; and some of them may perhaps be induced to read a letter addressed to your Lordship, which my own name alone has no power to recommend to them. And I feel confident that your Lordship will not object to my adopting this mode of stating my strong impressions on this subject, because upon my acquainting your Lordship with what I had myself done in this way, you were pleased to sanction it with your approval. *Secondly*, that though I should have shrunk from putting forth any private scheme, however promising, of my own invention, I do not feel the same diffidence in calling attention to a practice which appears to me to have every authority to recommend it, which either as Christians or as churchmen we could desire for it.

For it will hardly be denied by any one, that the practice of collecting on every Lord's Day the offerings of His people, accordingly as God hath prospered them, and enabled them to offer, is an *apostolical* practice. It is in strictest agreement with St. Paul's instructions to the Churches of Corinth and Galatia⁴. It was therefore (almost beyond a question) the mode in which they, who learned their faith and practice from the very lips of the apostles, made their offerings for pious and charitable works,—such as for the relief of the poor brethren at Jerusalem⁵, or for the support of the apostles⁶, when engaged in that which was strictly the apostolic

⁴ 1 Cor. xvi. 1, 2.

⁵ Rom. xv. 25, 26.

⁶ Phil. ii. 25; iv. 10—18.

work, the propagation of the faith⁷,—works, I need hardly observe, almost identical with our own almsgiving, and our offerings for the extension of our Redeemer's kingdom, whether at home or abroad. Nor was the practice of connecting this exercise of devotion towards God, and love towards man, with public worship, new in the apostles' days. It was, as your Lordship is doubtless well aware, simply the continuance of what was practised under the Mosaic Law, which ordered that the Israelites should not appear “before the Lord empty⁸,” and that “every man should give as he was able, according to the blessing of the Lord his God, which He had given him⁹.⁹” The apostles, therefore, did not originate, but, under the guidance of the Holy Ghost, they perpetuated in the Church this practice of connecting almsgiving with public worship.

Further,—That this apostolical usage is ordered by the Church of England, is evident from the plain directions in the Book of Common Prayer,—directions repeated in substance, though with some variations, at every revision of the Prayer Book, from the first book of Edward VI. to that settled, as now used, after the Restoration. (See the Rubrics before and after the Offertory Sentences, and also the last of those which follow the Post Communion Service.) This practice, therefore, to which I am anxious to call attention, having been sanctioned and ordered by the Apostles, and likewise enjoined by the Church of England, appears to me to have every authority attaching to its observance, which either as Christians or as churchmen we could desire for it.

To come now to the particular purpose for which I venture to address your Lordship,—I learn from the report of the late public meeting, that amongst other resolutions adopted was this: “That it is desirable that *all classes* of the community be interested in the promotion of the object of this Society.” By *all classes* are of course meant, not the *rich*

⁷ 2 Cor. ix. 1—*fin.*

⁸ Deut. xvi. 16, 17; Exod. xxxiv. 20.

⁹ Ecclus. xxxv. 4—11.

only, who can afford to give largely, but the *middle* and *lower* classes, the farmer, the tradesman, the artizan, and the labourer, who, though they may not be able to give largely, are nevertheless equally able, and equally bound, to act upon the apostolic rule, which teaches every Christian man, *whether rich or poor*, to give “*as God hath prospered him.*” My Lord, the principle embodied in that resolution appears to me to be a most important one. The offerings of the poor are, to say the least, *not less* acceptable to God than those of the rich. And while any such association of Christians, as this for building churches, is confined to *one class* only of the whole body, there is, I would humbly suggest, something wanting in order to our obtaining the fulness of God’s blessing upon our work. That this is true, not in theory only, but in practice, is well known to all who are acquainted with the workings of our different religious societies, which have, I believe, invariably prospered in proportion as they have received the offerings, and with them the prayers and sympathies of “all classes of the community.” Such a resolution, therefore, had, I consider, peculiar propriety. But the question will naturally occur to many minds, as it does to my own,—How are we to carry this resolution into effect? And such a question is the more reasonable, because I recollect hearing a similar resolution ably recommended and adopted at a similar meeting presided over by your Lordship’s predecessor. And what has followed? Let any one glance his eye over the list of contributions in the late reports, and he will be compelled to reply, “*Nothing.*” And, my Lord, it is because I have my fears that the resolution lately adopted may be followed by a like result, that I venture thus to express my sentiments.

I need hardly say, that on the Clergy of your Lordship’s diocese it almost entirely depends, whether this resolution is really to be acted upon or not: nor will it be denied, that as a body they have every inclination to act upon it, and to promote in every possible way the designs of this Society. And yet,

my Lord, with every good disposition on their part, I have my fears that unless some means, hitherto untried, are resorted to, that resolution will continue almost a dead letter, and the Society be supported, as hitherto, with very few exceptions, by one class of the community only. That your Lordship's appeal to your diocese will be promptly responded to by many, and that the more pressing difficulties under which the Society labours will be removed, I feel no doubt. Indeed this has been already proved. Nor do I doubt that the exertions of the Society's Secretaries will be rewarded by some increase in the annual subscriptions to the Society's funds. But, my Lord, I have nevertheless my fears that this Society will not do the extensive good which it might do, and which is urgently looked for from it, until the co-operation of *all classes* is secured to it; and I am fearful that, notwithstanding this resolution, that co-operation may not be obtained.

For, allow me, my Lord, to ask, in what way are the Clergy to proceed to obtain the assistance of the middle and lower classes of the community? The system of collecting from house to house is one which is burthensome, and to many minds very distasteful: and those who would be most likely to act upon it, have already their collections for missionary purposes, their subscriptions to schools, and other periodical demands, which are likely to make them reluctant to add to them the claims, most just though they be, of our Church Building Society. And supposing a plan to be adopted similar to that which is practised by the Society for the Propagation of the Gospel, and by the Church Missionary Society, and periodical meetings held, or sermons preached for the benefit of this Society,—I believe, my Lord, that though this plan might succeed to some extent, the success would be but partial. I speak from some little experience, as the secretary for a large district of our two oldest societies; and I venture to assert, what I have long felt, and believe to be felt by very many of my brethren, that we need

some better machinery, by which the sympathies of *the whole body* of the Church, not of a few parishes here and there, but of every parish in the kingdom, and of every individual in each parish, may be aroused, and not aroused only, but continually acted upon, in order that adequate means may be supplied for the great works in which the Church is engaged. In proof of this, I may appeal to all who have taken any active part in the increased efforts made of late to send missionaries to our long-neglected colonies, and to other parts of the heathen world. Who has not heard heart-stirring narratives of the wants of those colonies, and appeals, apparently irresistible, in behalf of all from whom the knowledge of their Saviour is still withheld? And under the influence of such appeals it has seemed to be impossible, considering the many and great blessings which we of the Church of England enjoy, that the means would be withheld from the Church, of accomplishing (so far as *money* can avail) that great part in the conversion of the world, which the Providence of God has so plainly committed to her. And yet we learn from the last report of the Society for the Propagation of the Gospel, that during the past year, though their noble efforts have been enlarged, their income has not increased: and if we turn to the Church Missionary Society, we find that the efforts of that society also are most seriously hindered, owing to their straitened resources. Experience, therefore, does not appear to encourage the attempt to interest *all classes* of the community in favour of our Church Building Society by similar means.

Here then, my Lord, it is, (I would humbly suggest,) that the Offertory, as ordered by the Church, seems to come to our relief. Instead of periodical collections, made from house to house, at the expense of much time and trouble, it provides the means of making such collections on every Lord's Day in the Lord's house. Instead of confining many of the good works in which the Church is engaged to one class of the community only, we may thus impart a share in them to

thousands, and tens of thousands, whose means will not allow them to contribute in any other way. Instead of the necessity of holding meetings, and burthening many of the Clergy,—generally those who bear the heaviest burthens in their own parishes,—with the task of travelling about the country as deputations from their respective societies, and thus entailing on the societies themselves considerable expense, every pastor will, as part of his regular ministrations, invite every member of his flock to make his weekly offering to God, “according to his ability.” Instead of the excitement, too often producing little fruit, of eloquent speeches from the platform, or charity sermons from the pulpit, every member of the Church will, on every Lord’s Day, be appealed to in the words of God, and exhorted “to do good unto all men,” “to be merciful after their power;” and will be reminded, that “with such sacrifices God is well-pleased,” and that, “He will not forget their works and labour that proceedeth of love.” And, instead of the system—savouring, surely, too much of the Pharisaism against which our Lord has repeatedly warned us, and certainly tending to produce unchristian motives—of publishing to the world every gift which is offered, we should enable all to exercise this part of Christian charity, as a solemn duty to be transacted between themselves and God, and exercised after the simple and unobtrusive manner prescribed to us by our Lord.

In these observations I hope, my Lord, I shall not be thought to speak slightly of practices of late so generally resorted to. I am not forgetful that they have been sanctioned by the highest authorities, and that God has to a great extent blessed them for the accomplishment of much good. And if, therefore, I deprecate them, it is only in comparison with what I believe to be the *more excellent way*, the way taught us by Apostles, and prescribed to us by the Church; and because I have my fears, that, until we return to that way, those who have at heart the promotion of true religion both at home and abroad, will have the pain of seeing the

building and endowing of churches, the extension of sound religious instruction, and the propagation of the Gospel, continually halting for want of the means of sustaining them.

Your Lordship is, no doubt, well aware, that this opinion has been recently advanced by several writers who have a power to recommend it, such as I have no pretensions to. Mr. Palmer, in his "Inquiry into the possibility of obtaining means for Church Extension without Parliamentary Grants¹," after showing, that "SIX MILLIONS of the inhabitants of England and Wales are beyond any effective control and guidance of the Church, with her present means, and that no less than 6000 additional clergy are requisite, at this moment, to place her in a state of *full efficiency*,"—maintains, that the weekly collections by the Offertory, if made in every congregation, would in all probability provide the means, which the Church requires to enable her to *build and to endow*, within the next 20 years, the requisite number of sacred edifices. Mr. Markland, in his "Remarks on English Churches, &c." has a chapter on the same subject, a part of which (and I might say the same of it all) is so pertinent to my purpose, that I will quote it at length. "We will," he says², "take as an example a church, in a city or town, with a congregation of about 700 persons of mixed classes of society, deducting one-third part for children and the very poorest of the congregation, say 232, there would be left 468 as donors :

	Weekly Sum.			Annual Amount.		
	s.	d.		£.	s.	d.
75 contributors at 2 6	.	.	.	487	10	0
100 , " 1 0	.	.	.	260	0	0
100 , " 0 6	.	.	.	130	0	0
50 , " 0 4	.	.	.	43	6	8
141 , " 0 1	.	.	.	31	1	0
468				£951	17	8

¹ 2nd Edition, p. 13.

² Pp. 146, 147.

“These minute calculations may seem almost derogatory to so high a subject as Christian charity; but more *general* statements may be doubted or denied, and these specifications will enable a Clergyman to form some idea what may be done in his own church in raising annually from his congregation the largest sums in the most effectual and least onerous manner. The sums themselves cannot but be regarded as moderate, and might be modified and varied in many respects. If the contributors of the larger sums were fewer in number, those of less amount might, on the other hand, be more numerous; still a sum of from £900 to £1000, might, from such a congregation, be annually collected. Occasional absence and deficiencies would be supplied, doubtless, by more liberal contributions at the great festivals. Many would feel, that extraordinary mercies demanded a larger measure of bounty, ‘Give unto the Most High as he hath enriched *thee*.’ (Eccl. xxxv. 10.) But if we take the collection, as above, at £950, and deduct one-fourth, as sacramental alms (to be appropriated as such alms have been usually distributed), £237 10s., a surplus will remain of £727 10s. This residue might be divided into equal proportions, the one-half to be applied in aid of the parochial schools, of hospitals, and dispensaries, and other *local* purposes, for which sermons have been accustomed to be preached, and the other moiety be paid over to the Societies for Church Building, and the Propagation of the Gospel both at home and abroad, in such proportions and manner, as the wants of these societies might from time to time demand.”

“As a further illustration of this practice,” Mr. Markland adds in a note, “we will take an existing city church with a congregation of 1000 persons in less affluent circumstances, generally, than those comprised in the above statement: in this church there has been collected, during the past year, on the several occasions when the Holy Communion was administered, the sum of £85 3s. 7d., and when eight charity sermons have been preached, £145 16s. 7d., total £231 0s. 2d.

Supposing weekly Offertory collections to be made in this church from two-thirds of the congregation, according to something like the following scale, the result would be as follows :—

	Weekly Sum.				Annual Amount.		
	s.	d.	.	.	£.	s.	d.
222 contributors at 1 0	577	4	0
222 ,, 0 6	288	12	0
222 ,, 0 1	48	2	0
					913	18	0
Sums actually received in one year	.	.	231	0	2		
Excess	£682	17	10"

I have no fear, my Lord, that Mr. Markland (having in his mind especially our *town* parishes) is over-sanguine in his expectations of what would be obtained by the regular use of the Offertory. And, in confirmation of this opinion, I beg to submit to your Lordship the following statement, which my friend, the Rev. Robert Eden, Rector of Leigh, Essex, has sent me of the Offertory collections in his church, from Advent Sunday, 1841, to Advent Sunday, 1842 :—

<i>The Sum Collected.</i>	<i>£ s. d.</i>	<i>How Disposed of.</i>	<i>£ s. d.</i>	<i>£ s. d.</i>
At the Offertory	125 18 6	For <i>special</i> purposes, e.g. Collections ordered by		
In the Alms' Boxes	16 14 3 $\frac{3}{4}$	Queen's Letters and Bishop's Letters	18 10 1 $\frac{1}{4}$	
	/	To the Poor, especially the Sick and Aged, in		
	/	Money	27 19 9 $\frac{3}{4}$	
	/	Ditto in Coals	8 7 10 $\frac{3}{4}$	
	/	Ditto in Bread	3 11 9 $\frac{3}{4}$	
	/	Ditto in Potatoes	2 0 1	
	/	Ditto in Clothing	10 0 0	
	/	Balance in hand for the use of the Poor	10 1 11 $\frac{1}{4}$	
			<hr/>	
			62 1 6 $\frac{1}{4}$	
		Remitted to the Bishop, and disposed of by his		
		Lordship as follows:—		
		To the Essex Church Building Society	11 0 0	
		To the Essex Diocesan Board of Education	11 0 0	
		To the Additional Curates' Fund	10 0 0	
		To the Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge	10 0 0	
		To the Society for the Propagation of the Gospel in Foreign Parts	20 1 6 $\frac{3}{4}$	
			<hr/>	
			62 1 6 $\frac{1}{4}$	
			<hr/>	
			£142 13 2 $\frac{3}{4}$	
			<hr/>	

ROBERT EDEN, *Rector.*
 D. MONTAGUE,
 EDMUND LAMPRELL, } *Churchwardens.*

Mr. Eden remarks on this statement, “ In former years, when the Offertory was at the Communion only, £50 was the utmost ever realised, if indeed it ever quite reached that. Thus the Society for the Propagation of the Gospel receives as much (the annual sermon being taken into the account) as when we collected by means of the parochial association. And in addition we have been able to divide £42 amongst other societies which never benefited by our parish. And the poor have also obtained a larger portion than they ever received before. In short, all is gain ; which must, I trust, redound to the glory of God.”

The population of the parish of Leigh amounts, I believe, to about 1000 souls, chiefly employed in fishing.

I hope that I shall not be thought very presumptuous if, in further confirmation of this opinion, I cite my own limited experience in my own parishes, which are small, and strictly agricultural. For more than two years I have invited my parishioners to contribute in this way their weekly offerings for pious and charitable purposes. It has been understood, that one-half of the sums collected would be devoted to the sick and aged in our own parishes, and that the other half would be given, in part to the Society for the Propagation of the Gospel, and in part to our Diocesan Church Building Society. The result has been, that we were able last year to send from this source £11 16s. 6d. to the Society for the Propagation of the Gospel, and £5 18s. 3d. to the Diocesan Church Building Society. And at the end of this year I hope that our contributions to the same Societies will not fall short of this. I should state, that as I have two churches, the collection is only made in each on alternate Sundays ; and when, my Lord, I add, that the inhabitants of my two parishes are only 400 in number, and that we have no advantage which does not belong to almost every other agricultural parish, I think I may fairly cite our case in proof of the high probability that the use of the Offertory will not be followed by disappointment. For human nature is, I imagine, the same

both here and elsewhere. The motives by which alone the ministers of Christ can effectually urge their congregations to almsgiving, are the same also. And therefore, if my little congregations can annually contribute £5 or £6 for building churches for their less favoured brethren, and twice that sum for the propagation of the Gospel, I would respectfully ask why the same thing is not equally practicable, in proportion to their wealth and population, in every parish in your Lordship's diocese? Only, I will add my belief, that while some few parishes might perhaps do less, others would undoubtedly do much greater things³. And seeing that during the year 1841 the contributions of my parishioners *by the Offertory* to the Church Building Society exceeded the total amount of *all the smaller subscriptions* entered in the last Report—which smaller subscriptions do, I imagine, represent the middle and lower classes—I do feel very sanguine, that the fund which would thus be contributed for building, and (what is not less important) for endowing new churches and chapels, would very largely exceed any thing which we have yet seen in this diocese, while there might also be supplied, from the same source, contributions to our Diocesan Board of Education, as well as for missionary purposes.

For, my Lord, the very use of the Offertory sentences, as a part of divine service, would, I believe, tend to recal us to a right mode of thinking respecting the great Christian duty of giving alms, whether for the poor in this world's goods, or for those who are destitute of that bread of life, which the Church of Christ, as His appointed means, can alone impart to them. And is there no need of such a recal? If Love be the fulfilling of our blessed Master's law; and if it be a part of Christian love to care for the eternal as well as temporal

³ There might, perhaps, occasionally arise some difference of opinion as to the right mode of distributing the sums thus collected, but this difficulty would be easily surmounted, wherever it arose, by the aid of your Lordship's advice.

interests of others, then there cannot be a duty more plainly incumbent on every Christian person, than this of helping to build churches for those who are too poor to provide them for themselves. And yet, my Lord, if we are to judge from its practical effect, this duty is only recognized in a most limited degree. It would not, I believe, be difficult to find parishes, even with large populations, in which the only subscriber to the Church Building Society is the Clergyman of the parish, and he by no means the richest inhabitant, or the best able to subscribe. In some such parishes it would, I believe, be found, that there is no association for missionary purposes, no means by which the people may contribute to any of the great Christian works in which the Church is engaged. And in these very parishes, it would, I believe, be found, that even the annual Queen's letter is received reluctantly, and followed by the most scanty offerings. Now why, my Lord, is this? Is it that the Clergy of these parishes have no desire to see their parishioners co-operate in good works? I am far from supposing this to be the cause; I am confident that it is otherwise. Or is it that the inhabitants of those parishes are less open to the blessed power of their religion, the true and essential test of which is, victory over self, and love towards others? No: but simply, as I believe, because there is wanting the means by which the Clergy may regularly appeal to their flocks, and by which every Christian worshipper may have the opportunity of exercising, as a part of Christian worship, his thankfulness towards God, and his love towards his brethren. That opportunity would, my Lord, be supplied by the regular use of the Offertory. And might we not fairly indulge the hope that, with its use, there would revive better feelings? that people would gradually learn, not the *duty* only, but also the *blessedness*, of partaking, according to their ability, in every good work? Might we not hope that men would come to see and believe that in the order of God's law, they benefit themselves far more by

giving, than by *keeping back*, of their substance? That the promise is⁴, “ Honour the Lord with thy substance, and with the first-fruits of all thine increase; so shall thy barns be filled with plenty, and thy presses shall burst out with new wine;” that “There is that scattereth, and yet increaseth; and there is that withholdeth more than is meet, and it tendeth to poverty;” and that the Lord Jesus hath said, “It is more blessed to give than to receive;” the fulness of which blessing, and the loss to those who seek it not, will, as our blessed Saviour has in many places declared, be abundantly realised at His second coming. I am persuaded, my Lord, that the use of the Offertory is more likely to be blessed by God Almighty to the revival of a practical faith in these truths, than any other means to which we can resort. I imagine it to be the *only means* by which “*all classes of the community*” can possibly be brought to take their share in those good works for which the help of all is so greatly needed.

The amount of success in restoring this practice would no doubt be at first more or less encouraging, according to the extent to which the duty of alms-giving has been already taught and practised in different parishes. In *some* it would be but the carrying out in a new and (as it appears to me) a better form, principles long and faithfully acted upon. In *others* it would be received as a strange thing, and would need much patient and oft-repeated explanation. But provided that such explanation was affectionately and perseveringly afforded, and information occasionally given respecting the several works to which the offerings were devoted, either by the Clergyman himself, or by printed statements periodically supplied to him, and circulated by him in his parish; provided, too, that all proper publicity was given to the mode in which the sums collected were disposed of,—the churchwardens being associated with the

⁴ Prov. iii. 10, 11.

Clergyman in his care of this sacred fund, as ordered by the Rubric,—and I cannot suppose it possible⁵ that the Offerory would, after a little while, be in any parish other than the channel by which the people would willingly make their grateful offerings for those pious and charitable works to which they are exhorted by their Pastor, under the sanction of their Bishop.

I will only add, that I am, my Lord,

With the sincerest respect,

Your Lordship's obedient servant,

R. SEYMOUR.

Kinwarton Rectory,

Dec. 5, 1842.

⁵ “Considering the great amount of wealth in this country, and, I must add, the charitable and liberal disposition of a large portion of our congregations, I cannot think there would be any difficulty in introducing the practice, with so holy and religious an object in view. Where the contribution was voluntary, and was urged and recommended on religious motives, it would surely be difficult to imagine on what grounds Christian congregations could object to it. It may be said, that the amount would be insignificant, and that many persons would not contribute to this fund. It is possible that some little time might be requisite to instruct our congregations in their duties in reference to the subject; but it is one which is so deeply connected with religious considerations, that if the clergy were obliged to bring it continually before the consciences of their hearers, it is morally impossible that there could be any failure. In fact, several clergy in various parts of the country have, without the least difficulty, restored the practice of collections in church. One clergyman mentioned to me lately, that the collections in his church (which are applied to the erection of a new church) average more than four pounds each Sunday.”—*The Rev. W. Palmer*, pp. 18, 19.

To the same effect Mr. Markland observes :

“ If this plan be regarded as visionary—that it is not worth the experiment, because (as it may be assumed) it *could* not answer—that, if put into practice, its success would be partial, and the contributions trifling—the author would answer in the words of our revered Metropolitan*, ‘ the practice of giving will create habits of bounty.’ Communicants always increase by a more frequent administration of the Eucharist, and the universal duty of Christian charity, on its true foundation, (by too many scarcely understood, and very little practised, *as a habit*,) would undoubtedly, by the adoption of this weekly custom, be both taught and encouraged.”—P. 149.

P.S. To the remarks which I have thus ventured to address to your Lordship, I have the satisfaction of being able to add the opinion of the learned Chancellor of the diocese of Worcester, respecting the lawfulness of the practice recommended in my Letter.

Case submitted to Dr. Phillimore, D.C.L., and Chancellor of the Diocese of Worcester, for his opinion.

A. B. the rector of C. informs his parishioners that he purposes henceforth to collect “*the alms for the poor, and the other devotions* of the people,” not only on the days when the Holy Communion is administered, but also on every Sunday, in the manner enjoined by the Rubric in the Prayer Book. He further explains to them that the offerings thus collected will be disbursed, partly (say one half) *within the parish*, amongst the poor, and partly (i. e. the other half) *without the parish*, in assisting to build churches for the poor, and to propagate the Gospel, &c. This proceeding on the part of the rector is sanctioned by the Bishop.

Is there any thing illegal in the practice thus entered on? Is it in the power of a churchwarden, or wardens, or of any parishioner, to hinder such a disbursement of money thus collected, the purpose to which it will be devoted having been previously made known, and its disbursement in this way sanctioned by the Bishop?

The Rubrics, to which attention is particularly called, are :

1. The two immediately preceding the Offertory sentences.
2. That which follows them.
3. The last of the Rubries which follow the Post-Communion Service.

Opinion.

The question involved in this case is, to me, at least, a

question *primæ impressionis*, and therefore I have taken rather more time to consider it, than I should otherwise have done.

As the Book of Common Prayer was appended to the Act of Uniformity, it follows that the provisions contained in the Rubrics, which form a component part of the Book of Common Prayer, have the force and validity of statute law: I am therefore of opinion that the solution of the question propounded is to be sought for in the Rubrics alone.

The Rubrics authorise the collection of “alms for the poor, and other devotions of the people,” during the reading of the Offertory, whether the Offertory be followed or not by the Communion.

Further, after the termination of Divine Service, the Rubric enjoins, that “the money given at the Offertory shall be disposed of to such pious and charitable uses as the minister and churchwardens shall think fit.”

Thus, the collection may consist of “the other devotions of the people,” as contradistinguished from “the alms for the poor.”

Again, there is no limitation of the money collected at the Offertory to parochial purposes. The only direction given is, that it shall be applied to “pious and charitable uses.”

From the best consideration, then, that I have been able to apply to the facts detailed in the case, I am led to the clear conclusion, that the incumbent of C. may, with the concurrence of the churchwardens, apply the money collected at the Offertory in the manner he proposes, and that there is nothing illegal in the practice which he is desirous of introducing into his parish.

As to the second point, it is undoubtedly competent to the churchwardens to object to such an appropriation of the money collected at the Offertory, as the rector contemplates; and if such objection be persisted in by both or either of the churchwardens, the question at issue must be referred to the ordinary, i. e. to the Bishop, whom the law has constituted

sole arbiter, if any disagreement should arise between the minister and churchwardens, as to the mode in which the money thus collected should be distributed.

(Signed)

JOSEPH PHILLIMORE.

Doctors' Commons, Jan. 7, 1843.

The following opinion was given, though not formally, by another learned civilian to a friend, who submitted to him the same case :

“Of course there is nothing to hinder the clergy and churchwardens together from disposing of the Offertory collection to any pious and charitable uses, which are not contrary to the rules of the Church, and therefore they may *jointly* apply the fund to the Society for the Propagation of the Gospel, the building of churches for the poor, the maintenance of poor clergy, &c., as well as to the sick and poor of the parish.”

The following extracts from a Pastoral Letter of the Bishop of New Jersey, (for which I am indebted to the Christian Remembrancer,) will, I feel assured, be deemed a valuable addition to the above. After recommending to his clergy that, instead of monthly, or at rarer intervals, as had been the previous practice, **THE OFFERINGS OF THE CHURCH BE MADE EVERY LORD'S DAY, in connexion with the Offertory,** as appointed in the Communion Service, the Bishop proceeds thus :—

“ I. This was the primitive mode.

“ II. This is the simplest and most direct address that can be made to the parishioners.

“ III. This is the Church's proper action, in her due organization, under the direction of her ministers, **on the call of her Divine Head.**

“ This plan combines many advantages.

“ 1. Its *frequency* is an advantage. The contribution can never be forgotten.

“ 2. Its *constancy* is an advantage. The supply from it will be perpetual and sure. There is nothing to be trusted like a habit.

“ 3. Its *simplicity* is an advantage. It is intelligible by every one, and will commend itself even to little children.

“ 4. Its *moderation* is an advantage. Returning frequently, it, of course, calls, at each time, for comparatively little. Thus it meets the convenience of all. ‘ If thou hast much, give plenteously ; if thou hast little, do thy diligence gladly to give of that little.’

“ 5. Its *inexpensiveness* is an advantage. It will cost nothing for agencies, and be encumbered with no officers.

“ 6. Its *sobriety* is an advantage. It makes no exciting appeals ; and creates no heat, to be followed by a more than corresponding coldness. It is the oozing of the water from the rock that fills the springs. It is the gentle dropping of the dew that clothes the vales with verdure.

“ What are its disadvantages ?

“ 1. It is disagreeable to be asked so often to contribute.—As if the Lord’s Prayer did not ask *every day* for ‘ daily bread ! ’

“ 2. It is disagreeable to make the collection so frequently.—As if it were not better to be ‘ a door-keeper in the house of the Lord, than to dwell in the tents of the ungodly.’

“ 3. It is disagreeable to connect the giving of money with the worship of the sanctuary.—As if there were any surer test of a heart given up to God ! As if the sanctuary itself could be built or sustained without money ! As if the offerings, by God’s own appointment, were not formerly brought to his own holy temple ! As if the silver and the gold were not all his !

“ 4. It is disagreeable to be detained so long.—As if five minutes occupied in hearing sentences from holy Scripture and in prayer were to be esteemed a hardship for a soul that looks to an eternity of worship !

“ Brethren, dearly beloved in the Lord, I have but little more to say. I need say but little more. My office compels me to acquaint myself with the destitution of the Saviour’s ‘ sheep that are scattered abroad in the midst of this naughty world.’ I have only you to look to for the means by which they may be gathered to this fold, ‘ and saved through Christ for ever.’ If I seem unfortunate to any of you, it is that you may secure that precious privilege, of which He hath said, ‘ It is more blessed to give than to receive.’ You will pardon me this wrong.”

THE END.





